

## 4.3 Maintaining Quality Teaching

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longest established Japanese program in Australia, reported:

*The immediate problems in the teaching of Japanese and Japan-related courses at the University of Sydney are largely financial. Funding to provide ideal (or even satisfactory) staffing levels is unavailable and there is little physical space for expansion.* (Clarke 1989:92)

The other aspect to the staff shortage was that qualified academic members now had more opportunities to seek an appointment with other universities that offered better working hours, conditions and more research opportunities. This resulted in added difficulties in Japanese programs in some universities, particularly those away from the major centres such as Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. McCormack presented an extreme example of this in describing the situation of the University of Adelaide, where the majority of academic staff members had been lost to other universities in the midst of the *Tsunami*.

*....part-time and full-time tutors have taken up tenable lectureships at other universities, and lecturers have moved to universities which offered better working hours and conditions and allowed more time for research. Although a number of new appointments were made to commence in 1989 ... the Centre faces the prospect by mid-1989 of having only one staff member with more than one year's experience in the Japanese language program [of University of Adelaide].* (McCormack 1989:28)

McCormack also reported that all the seven newly-hired staff members had been recruited from outside Australia. They were from Japan, Malaysia and Britain.

### 4.3 Maintaining Quality Teaching

The *Tsunami* of 1988 brought with it a multiple of problems: shortage of qualified academic staff, climbing students-staff ratios, increasing teaching load which tended to lead to lowering of staff morale. The shortage of

other resources, such as classroom space, language laboratory seats, and the all important library resources added to the difficulties.

In the face of these seemingly insurmountable difficulties, priorities had to be sorted out. Most of the Japanese studies academic members, who were responsible for the operation of the program, placed the first priority on the maintenance of teaching quality. It was, however, not an easy task to put the ideal into practice. Taking the class size, for example, academic conscience found it difficult to justify the increase in class sizes. The logistics, however, told of the impossibility of maintaining the small class teaching in most cases.

*It is a general rule that the larger the class the lower the quality of the teaching; classes of 30 and more that teachers (and students) are having to grapple with in 1988 are pedagogically indefensible. (McCormack 1988:40)*

The number of academic staff members had to be increased. The immediate prospect of adequate staff increases, however, was minimal. Many Japanese programs, therefore had to resort to hiring part-time casual staff as tutors. They were recruited mainly from post-graduate students, local Japanese residents with little experience in language teaching and Australians with varying degrees of Japanese language competency.

The heavy reliance on casual staff members itself led to other problems. Coordinating a number of casual staff to share the teaching programs alone can create an administrative nightmare. Griffith University reported in 1989:

*The Division has had to employ an unacceptably large number of sessional teachers, with consequent difficulties in coordination and communication. (Twine 1989:44)*

Many casual tutors lacked training in professional language teaching methodologies. The rapid increase in student numbers, however, allowed little time for those inexperienced tutors to receive formal training.

Consequently many had to learn as they taught.

There was another reality which had to be faced. Most of the experienced full-time academic staff members were committed to the teaching of higher year and post-graduate courses. Consequently, the teaching of first year classes, where the increase of students made the most impact, was largely left to casual and part-time staff members. McCormack described the situation with clarity:

*In all universities a large proportion of the teaching, especially at first year, is being done by the 'emergency teachers' of the profession, graduate students, local Japanese residents; in short, the poorest paid and least qualified face the full force of the student wave. (McCormack 1988:41)*

Afraid of being unable to balance the increased student demand with the maintenance of high quality in teaching, some universities decided to place a ceiling on the first year student intake. This, however, was not expected to be a long-term solution, as non-increase or small increase of students would adversely influence future funding and limit the prospect of staff expansion.

The *Tsunami* of 1988 ultimately led to the remarkable expansion of Japanese education in Australia. The initial shock of the *Tsunami*, however, placed Japanese programs in most universities in a great struggle, particularly in the maintenance of teaching quality. The situation lasted for a few years, much longer at some universities. Reviewing the situation today, nearly fifteen years after the *Tsunami*, one wonders how the Japanese programs in Australian universities escaped from a major set back in teaching quality during this period. The only explanation for this remarkable achievement would be the extraordinary dedication shown by Japanese studies academia, from the professors of the department all the way to casual tutors, during that time. The enthusiasm of many tutors has to be particularly mentioned. Their efforts inspired students, helped to maintain the academic standard and more than compensated for their lack of experience. Many of those former tutors are respected members of

Australia's Japanese academia today.

#### 4.4 Developing Programs to Meet Australia's Need

The *Tsunami* phenomenon was a dramatic expression of the Australian community's demand for increased numbers of graduates with Japan skills and literacy. Japanese academia throughout Australian universities was well aware of this. As seen in Chapter 3, Australia's particular requirements for Japan skills and literacy have already been defined amongst Australian academia. In order to satisfy the requirements, students have to be trained in the three areas of intellectual development as articulated by Stockwin: language competence; broad-based understanding of Japan and its society; and at least one relevant specialisation in Japan-related fields.

At most universities, the training of students in the first and second area were available, or expected to be available within the Japanese studies department. Not many Japanese studies departments, however, had the facilities or resources, staff resources in particular, to provide students with sufficient opportunities for training in the third area.

Different universities explored a variety of approaches to find possible solutions for this problem. At a number of universities, successful solutions were found in intra-and inter-institutional cooperation. These solutions were, however, only available at the major centres of Japanese studies that already had well established programs.

At Monash University, intra-faculty arrangements made possible the introduction of a major or honours degree in Japanese with Law, and a combined degree in Engineering and Japanese. Postgraduate students were able to work towards a diploma or a Master of Arts degree which combine Japanese with other Asian studies. The course leading to a diploma in Australian tourism also included Japanese as a component.

Monash was in a more fortunate position than many other universities in that a number of departments and faculties outside Japanese offered Japan-related courses. These included the Departments of History, Music and